

GROWING UP WITH US™...

A Newsletter For Those Who Care For Children

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©LATE CHILDHOOD... DEVELOPMENTAL TRAITS & MILESTONES

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Behavioral Objectives: After reading this newsletter the learner will be able to:

1. Discuss the developmental task and key milestones of late childhood, as well as growth trends during this period.
2. Identify implications for the healthcare provider related to growth and development during the school-age period.

During late childhood, when children turn 6 years old, they enter the school-age period of development. School-age child development is a range from 6 to 12 years of age. During this stage, observable differences in height, weight, and build are prominent. It's important to remember, there is a vast difference, in all areas of growth and development, between a 6 year old and 12 year old child.



This newsletter will review the developmental task facing school-agers, as well as growth and development traits during this stage. Age-appropriate social and language development during the school-age period will be discussed, as well as implications for the healthcare provider.

AGE-SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENTAL TASK

Industry versus Inferiority: If a sense of trust, autonomy and initiative has been established in earlier years, school-agers now struggle with mastery of the developmental task, industry versus inferiority. The child who, because of his or her successful resolutions of earlier core conflicts, is trusting, autonomous, and full of initiative, will now learn to be industrious. A sense of industry leads to the virtue of competency.

Children this age must "tame their imagination" and dedicate themselves to education and to learning social skills and rules. School-age children are workers and producers and try to develop a sense of self-worth by refining skills. Special talents often emerge during late childhood, such as an athletic or musical ability. Needing achievement, school-agers want to engage in tasks and activities they can carry through to completion. When children feel successful in tasks and relationships, they develop a sense of industry, mastery and self-assurance. School-age children must learn that there is pleasure not only in conceiving a plan, but, also, in carrying it out. They must learn the feeling of success, whether it is academically, on the playground and socially. If the child is allowed too little success, because of harsh parents, teachers or rejecting peers, for example, then he or she will, instead, develop a sense of inferiority or incompetence.

Implications: Allowing the ill school-age child to feel productive, rather than dependent, is important to promoting a sense of industry. For example, allowing the ill child, who is able, to help make his or her bed or the child whose I & O is being monitored to help keep track of how much he or she has had to drink, is helpful.

GROWTH TRENDS

Physiologically, the school-age years begin with the shedding of the first deciduous (primary or "baby") teeth. Since all primary teeth (20) are lost during this age period, late childhood is sometimes referred to as the "age of the loose tooth".

And, the early years of the school-age period are known as the "ugly duckling stage", when the new secondary, permanent teeth, appear to be too large for the child's face. During late childhood, the jaw begins to expand to accommodate permanent teeth. The school-age period ends at puberty, when all permanent teeth erupt, excluding the wisdom teeth.

During late childhood, children are more graceful, limber and steadier on their feet. Body fat typically decreases and the school-ager takes on a slimmer look with longer legs. Growth in height and weight is slow, but progresses at a steady pace, as compared to the rapid growth rate of infancy and adolescence. Between 6 and 12 years of age, children will grow an average of 2 inches per year, to gain 1 to 2 feet in height by the end of late childhood. Additionally, they will almost double their weight during this period, increasing 4½ and 6½ pounds per year. For example, the average 6 year old weighs 46 pounds, while the average 12 year old child weighs 88 pounds. During this period girls and boys differ very little in size. However, at the end of this period, as girls begin the growth spurt of pre-adolescence before boys, girls begin to surpass boys in both height and weight.



As growth is slow and steady during the school-age period, caloric needs decrease. However, increased independence, sedentary activities, such as video games, and the temptation of a variety of "junk food", those which contain sugars, starches and excess fats, makes obesity a major health concern in this stage.

Obesity has physical, as well as social implications. Obese school-age children often feel isolated and lonely. Because of this alienation, they often fail to develop key life and social skills, as well as a sense of industry.

DEVELOPMENTAL TRENDS & IMPLICATIONS

Social: Daily relationships with teachers and friends, particularly in school and in the neighborhood, provide the most important social interactions in the child's life. School age is the time when children associate with same-sex peers and having a best friend, with whom they share secrets, is common.

One of the outstanding characteristics of late childhood is the formation of groups. Membership in formal groups, such as Scouts or Little League baseball, is common. Secret clubs, such as in tree houses, where it is a "privilege" to join, are also common. Often there is a password or a special sticker required for admission.

With participation in such formal and informal groups, school-age children learn rules and how to compete and cooperate with others. Poor relationships with peers and a lack of group identity can contribute to inferiority, as well as bullying behavior. Bullying behavior occurs frequently in school-age children who lack appropriate academic or social skills. Such behavior is believed to be an attempt to act out anger and feelings of resentment.

School-age children enjoy reading, particularly if it is valued by their parents. They also enjoy playing formal games with others, such as age-appropriate board or card games, as well as alone, such as video games or jigsaw puzzles. Regardless of the game being played, adherence to rules is fanatic. However, 6 year olds, who want to be best, typically cheat to win.

Conformity and rituals permeate the play of school-age children. Not only do they dominate in games, but they are evident in much of the children's behavior and language. Late childhood is full of chants, such as "Eeny, meeny, miney, mo"; "The last one there is a rotten egg" and "Step on a crack and you break your mother's back." Children derive a great deal of pleasure from such sayings, which have been handed down through generations.

School-agers are typically avid collectors. Older children will organize their collections neatly in scrapbooks, on shelves or in boxes. School-agers also enjoy telling and hearing jokes and riddles, as well as participating in arts and craft projects, such as paint-by-number projects and putting together models. Older school-age children also enjoy complex projects, such as chemistry sets and microscopes.



Hero worship is also common during late childhood. The "hero" can be a number of persons, such as a teacher or a national sports or entertainment figure.

Implications: Providing opportunities for ill school-agers to play with age-mates is important, if at all possible. If the child is confined to bed, providing age-appropriate toys, such as games and books, is helpful. Additionally, encouraging the child to tell you about his or her collection, hero and/or to tell you jokes and riddles is helpful, as well as diversional.

Language: School-age children typically have longer attention spans and have sophisticated verbal skills and comprehension abilities. During this period they will begin to use more complex grammatical forms and narrative skills improve markedly. School-age children are increasingly able to give detailed instructions, such as explaining directions over the phone. School-agers are interested in learning, frequently asking questions.

Implications: School-age children profit from detailed explanations of what is being done to them during treatments or procedures. They typically not only want to know what is being done, for example during a physical assessment, but, also, what the findings mean - "Your lungs sound normal, so your body is getting the oxygen it needs." School-age children are also interested in manipulating instruments used "on them", as well as learning how they work and the meaning of the findings.



SCHOOL-AGE - KEY DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

6 YEARS 1st grade
Counts to 13
Knows right from left hand
Reads from memory
Develops concept of numbers
Wants to be first and best
Likes simple card games - "Go Fish®"; Old Maid® and board games, such as Candyland®
Will cheat to win
Sometimes steals money
Giggles a lot
Takes bath without supervision

7 YEARS 2nd grade
Develops modesty
Has concept of time
Reads clock to nearest quarter hour
Uses knife for cutting food
Brushes and combs hair
May steal
Can do basic math problems

8-9 YEARS 3rd and 4th grades
Counts backwards from 20
Knows the date
Can repeat days of the week
Reads books, but also enjoys comics
Can do multiplication, division, simple fractions and decimals
Likes money, wants to do chores or have allowance

10-12 YEARS 5th, 6th and 7th grades
Can do factors and square roots
Uses telephone for practical purposes
Washes and dries own hair
Enjoys more complex card games—Uno® and board games—Monopoly®
Makes useful articles
Loves friends, talks about them a lot
May have best friend and enjoys sleep-overs
May be left alone for an hour or so
Begins to be interested in opposite sex

During late childhood, cognitive, language and social skills continue to develop. Incorporating age-appropriate skills into the care of a school-ager aids in population-specific communication, as well as being diversional, during quieter times and painful procedures and treatments.

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